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Current chair leads busy year of public policy events

By **CHRIS KUHN**
Special Sections
correspondent

For Ron Pierce, serving as chairman for the Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce for the past year couldn't have come at a better time. In a year full of local and state legislative issues up for debate, this new role allowed him the opportunity to do something he had always wanted to do: educate others about the latest public policy issues directly affecting them as business owners and residents in the Brandon area.

"One of the most important roles that a chamber of commerce can play in their community is being involved in public policy on behalf of businesses. A lot of businesses don't fully understand the impact that public policy can have on their day-to-day business," says the consultant who lives in north Brandon with his wife and young son.

For the longtime resident and FSU alum, it's the small hometown feel and tight-knit nature of the community that makes Brandon truly feel like home.



Greater Brandon Chamber of Commerce

Chairman Ron Pierce, right, presents local chiropractor Glen Thornton with a 2010 Successful Doctors Award.

"I live here, work here, have a son in public schools here, so it's very important to me from a business standpoint to make Brandon the best possible place to do business," he says.

Pierce launched his own firm, RSA Consult-

ing Group, LLC (www.rsaconsultingllc.com) while serving in his role of chamber chairman during 2010. The group specializes in government relations primarily, representing individuals and businesses with

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public policy issues before the state, county or city legislatures. His clients include the Tampa Bay Lightning, Pepin Distributing Co., Tampa Bay Partnership and the Florida Association of Community Health Centers.

A chamber member for the past 10 years, member of its board of directors and an active participant with the organization's government advisory council, Pierce says his longtime love of politics and previous campaign work have assisted him this year in the new role.

As chairman, Pierce was able to land a number of public policy educational events hosted by the chamber in a year especially heavy with public policy discussion and key referenda on the ballot.

"We did a lot to educate our membership about the transportation referendum on the Hillsborough County ballot this year," he says. "If you were for or against, that was fine, but we just wanted to make sure that from a factual standpoint, everybody knew what it meant. We wanted residents to understand what this referendum would mean to them 10 years from now and 20 years from now."

Pierce served as emcee for several transit-related informative events, including visits by local county commissioners who addressed the chamber's government advisory council and a membership luncheon featuring a transportation discussion led by panelists Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio, Hillsborough County Commissioner Mark Sharpe and Bob Clifford, executive director of the Tampa Bay Regional Transportation



During his year as chairman, Ron Pierce has emceed and spoken before membership at a number of events, such as this year's annual dinner.

Authority (TBARTA).

Chamber President Tammy Bracewell says that she was pleased with how well the chamber was able to keep its members informed about the latest legislative issues this past year, something she attributes to Pierce's passion for public policy education and a commitment in line

with the chamber's own general goals.

"We decided a long time ago that even if we didn't take public positions on something that we would make sure that the members were informed and educated about it," Bracewell says.

"We did a lot about Amendment Four this year and the transportation referendum. It seemed like we were having something every other week if not every week."

During Pierce's role as chairman, the chamber underwent a reorganization, something that Pierce, as both chairman and a member of the board who weighed in on the restructure, says was necessary.

"As a member of the board of directors, it's our responsibility that the executive team at the chamber has the tools in their toolbox to be successful. We had to not only be

professionals throughout the Bay area. Soon, he will pass the gavel to this year's incoming chamber chairperson, Melissa Snively. While he will continue to serve on the executive committee and be involved with the government advisory council, he looks forward to returning to his previous role of chamber member. Pierce notes that he'll continue to urge colleagues to keep informed about issues that affect them as citizens and entrepreneurs and to take full advantage of the vast array of networking opportunities chamber membership affords them.

Bracewell says that Pierce was helpful during the restructuring phase, a time of change and transition.

"Ron is very level-headed, which was important during the past year with all of the reorganization. He was able to keep things on an even keel, where we didn't miss a beat," she says.

Last fall, Pierce was recognized by the Tampa Bay Business Journal as one of its 2010 Up & Comers, for the 30-39 years old category, a designation which celebrates the accomplishments of young business

members throughout the Bay area. Soon, he will pass the gavel to this year's incoming chamber chairperson, Melissa Snively. While he will continue to serve on the executive committee and be involved with the government advisory council, he looks forward to returning to his previous role of chamber member. Pierce notes that he'll continue to urge colleagues to keep informed about issues that affect them as citizens and entrepreneurs and to take full advantage of the vast array of networking opportunities chamber membership affords them.

"In business, it's about building relationships and having those relationships in place to be successful," he says. "I have no doubt in my mind that the Brandon Chamber of Commerce will help businesses create those relationships to be successful."

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